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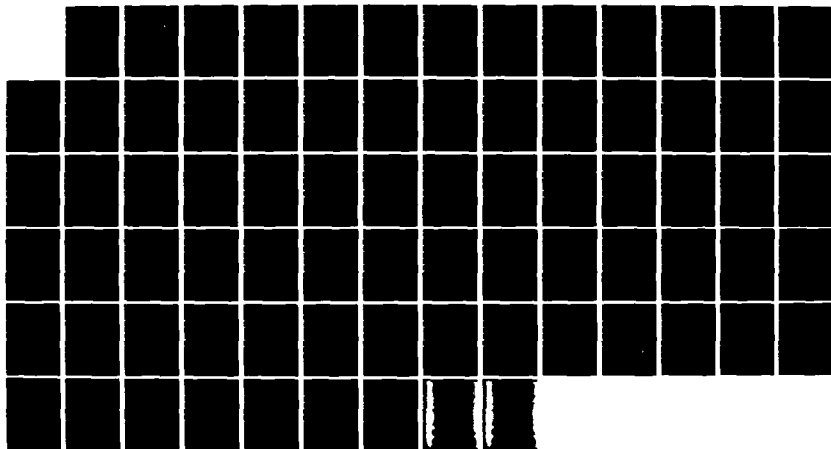
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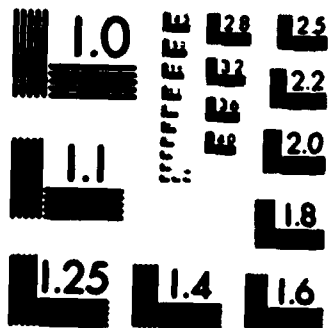
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GUERRILLA WARFARE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA:  
A GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

by

Michael Larmas Smith

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JUL 18 1984  
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A Thesis submitted to the faculty of The  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter	
I. Introduction . . . . .	1
II. The Framework for Analysis . . . . .	8
III. Insurgency in Mozambique . . . . .	21
IV. Insurgency in Angola . . . . .	40
V. Other Insurgency Movements in Southern Africa . . . .	57
Map Appendix . . . . .	62
Bibliography . . . . .	65

# ABSTRACT

Michael Larmas Smith. Guerrilla Warfare in Southern Africa: A Geographical Analysis (under the direction of Douglas Eyre).

In addition to intensifying worldwide interest and involvement in the region, recent victories gained by selected guerrilla movements in Southern Africa have revealed the need to refine accepted theories on guerrilla warfare. Each of these movements has displayed a distinctive pattern in its territorial evolution. Using the McColl Model as an analytical construct, this study focuses upon the guerrilla wars of the 1960s and 1970s in Mozambique and Angola to determine both the applicability of the McColl Model and the exact nature of this pattern of territorial evolution. The assessment of this pattern may become a valuable reference for future military actions and national policies in the region.

## Chapter One: Introduction

### Background and Literature Review

Guerrilla warfare has taken on great importance in the post World War II era. Fueled by the successes of a variety of underground movements in World War II, the increased amount of arms and ammunition available at the end of the war, the increased sense of nationalism throughout the world, and the examples provided by successful guerrilla wars in countries like China, Cuba, and Algeria, insurgent movements throughout the world have increasingly adopted guerrilla warfare as a means to achieve their objectives. The levels of success of these movements has varied considerably. While some movements are clearly only minor irritants, others have become so effective as to be able to topple legitimate governments. The continent of Africa has several insurgent movements which exemplify this range in levels of success.

Nowhere in Africa has there been a region of insurgent activity as intense and sown with worldwide implications as that of Southern Africa. Indeed, Colin Legum, a noted Southern Africa scholar relates that,

All the major powers are now actively engaged in the struggles between the White minority regimes and their Black nationalist challengers in Southern Africa. . . .<sup>1</sup>

More ominously, General Sir John Hackett, author of the bestselling book, The Third World War, predicts that the insurgent conflicts

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<sup>1</sup>Colin Legum, "Angola," in Southern Africa: The Continuing Crisis, eds. Gwendolen M. Carter and Patrick O'Meara, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p.16.

in Southern Africa will be the impetuses of World War III.<sup>2</sup> At stake are some of the world's most mineral rich areas, strategically important locations, and East-West desires for spheres of influence or for maintenance of spheres of influence and allies. Despite widespread insurgent warfare activity in the region, the levels of success have varied from country to country.

Within the last ten years, insurgent forces in Mozambique, Angola, and Zimbabwe have all managed to replace ruling White minority regimes with more "legitimate" forms of government. Meanwhile, insurgent forces attempting to liberate South Africa and Namibia, continue their bids to foster successful national revolutions. All of the insurgent movements in the region are linked, either directly or indirectly to post-World War II developments in insurgent warfare theory.

Analyzing insurgent/guerrilla warfare and guerrilla warfare theory in the post-World War II era has occupied the research of many accomplished authors. Critical investigations into the complex conflicts in Southern Africa have yielded a wealth of information on the conduct of guerrilla warfare in that region. For example, Southern Africa: The New Politics of Revolution (1976) by Basil Davidson (Angola and Mozambique), Joe Slovo (South Africa), and Anthony R. Wilkinson (Zimbabwe), takes advantage of the extensive experience of its co-authors and thereby reveals significant insights

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<sup>2</sup>General Sir John Hackett, The Third World War (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1978), p.1.

into the political aspects of the region's liberation movements. Kenneth W. Grundy's works: Guerrilla Struggle in Africa: An Analysis and Preview (1971) and Confrontation and Accommodation in Southern Africa: The Limits of Independence (1973) have proven to be mainstays as a result of the author's attempt to develop a typology of guerrilla movements for the region.

Any lack of detail concerning the daily operations of the guerrillas in the movements alluded to earlier, is made up by Al J. Venter in his books, The Zambezi Salient: Conflict in Southern Africa (1974) and The Terror Fighters: A Profile of Guerrilla Warfare in Southern Africa (1969). Exclusive photographs and penetrating interviews will secure the importance of Venter's books for many years. Colin Legum's "Guerrilla Warfare and African Liberation Movements," in Africa Today (1967) and Nathan Shamyurira's Liberation Movements in Southern Africa (1978) are similar in that both authors painstakingly search for the similarities and differences between the guerrilla movements in the region. These assessments were conducted approximately eleven years apart. When critically compared, they sketch a revealing picture of the changes in each liberation movement during their most critical years.

Finally, the research of Michael Morris, Terrorism: Southern Africa (1971) and John A. Marcum, "The Exile Condition and Revolutionary Effectiveness: Southern African Liberation Movements," in Southern Africa in Perspective: Essays in Regional Politics (1972), offer quite different perspectives of insurgency in Southern Africa.



Morris, as the title of his work implies, offers a unique "right of center" exposition on the movements of the region. Though the author's claim of having written the first full account, in detail, of terrorism and insurgency in Southern Africa may be questioned, the book is well done and serves as a good balancer for researchers who are apt to find that the scales tip heavily in favor of "left of center" literature. John Marcum was among the first to examine the character and effect of the operations of the liberation movements outside of their target countries. This work's significance is underlined by the fact that subsequent to its publication, many guerrilla leaders cited it and used it as a guide for their own organizations.

All of the works mentioned have one trait in common--none examines the evolution of the revolutionary movements geographically. What is currently lacking, therefore, is an appraisal of the significance of the territorial aspects of guerrilla warfare in the region. Few will argue that whether one speaks of infiltration routes into a given region, or the importance of safe base areas, an evaluation of the significance of territory and its attributes in the various phases of a protracted struggle can often be pivotal to the relative success or failure of a guerrilla operation. Geographer Robert W. McColl demonstrates this in his study, "The Insurgent State: Territorial Bases of Revolution" (1969). Though now dated and based upon guerrilla actions in locations other than Southern Africa, McColl clearly demonstrates the presence of distinct geographic stages in

the evolution of successful guerrilla movements. McColl's work will be referred to again in Chapter 2 of this analysis. Another important study of guerrilla warfare which presents a geographic perspective is Patrick O'Sullivan's "A Geographical Analysis of Guerrilla Warfare" (1983). A review of his conclusions not only reveals several substantial differences of opinion with McColl regarding urban areas, but a need for further contemporary research in this very important subject area.

#### The Problem and its Significance

The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which the McColl Model concerning guerrilla warfare is applicable to past and present insurgent movements in Southern Africa. Analysis is limited to the major guerrilla movements in the region which have attained their objectives, and those which are in the midst of their struggles. Each is examined for a possible territorial pattern in its evolution.

The 1970s successes of the Mozambican, Angolan, and Zimbabwean guerrilla movements, as well as the recent initiatives of the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa; the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in Angola; and the Mozambique National Revolution (MNR) in Mozambique have generated a considerable amount of analysis in book and article form. The usual and most numerous studies are political and historical in nature. This study, with its focus on territorial patterns which coincide with specific phases of a successful protracted struggle, adds a neglected yet important

dimension to these prior studies by specialists in other disciplines. Indeed, the awareness of geographic explanations for concerns such as selection of strategic objectives may cause a rethinking of explanations/theories which previously lacked a spatial perspective.

This study may have applied military potential. As one military leader has stated, "There is a good chance that many of the junior officers and noncommissioned officers sitting here today may some day be involved in Africa in one way or another."<sup>3</sup> Many of the military situations in Southern Africa are so explosive that they could easily erupt into major operations that might involve United Nations or great power interests and intervention.

For example, South Africa's continued illegal occupation of Namibia may ultimately evoke any number of international military confrontations. It is also conceivable that the Angolan and Mozambican regimes will continue to seek advice on how to subdue the insurgents in their countries. Regardless of the country within the region, and regardless of which force is concerned, the military-geographic information derived from this study may have an important role in understanding the military processes involved. In turn, an awareness of these patterns may contribute to the planning efforts of military or civilian authorities attempting to maintain or achieve the political, economic or social integrity of their country in the face of organized guerrilla action.

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<sup>3</sup>Albert B. Akers, Major General, U.S. Army, as quoted by AUSA News, May, 1983.

### Methodology

After a framework for analysis is established (Chapter 2), this study concentrates upon an examination of the insurgent movements in Mozambique and Angola in the 1960s and 1970s. Each country saw an insurgent group become successful in a protracted struggle to wrest control of the nation from white minority regimes. Each case is examined for the extent to which the McColl Model is applicable in describing the evolution of a guerrilla plan of action. Following these evaluations, brief examinations of the protracted struggles in Zimbabwe, Namibia (ongoing) and South Africa (ongoing) are made as further tests of the applicability of the McColl Model.

## Chapter Two: The Framework for Analysis

This chapter provides the analytical framework within which the Southern African case studies are examined. Pertinent terms are defined, a brief sketch of the historical evolution of Southern African liberation movements is presented, and the basic tenets and characteristics of guerrilla warfare included in the McColl Model are outlined.

### Some Definitions

Southern Africa is distinguished by its large permanent white population and the economic dominance of South Africa. The nations lying south of a line traced by the northernmost borders of Angola, Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique, are commonly included in this region. They include Angola, Namibia, South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique. Each has had a history of guerrilla warfare in recent decades (see map appendix 1).

"Guerrilla," "terrorist," "freedom fighter," "rebel," "insurgent," "resistance fighter" and "partisan" are all terms used to describe "one who rises in open resistance to established authority."<sup>4</sup> Several of these terms are obviously judgemental. For example, "terrorist" and "rebel" suggest bias in favor of the established authority. In this study, "guerrilla" and "insurgent" will be used.

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<sup>4</sup>Michael Morris, Terrorism (Capetown, South Africa: Howard Timmins, 1971), p.1.

If an insurgent is defined as one who rises in opposition to civil authority or the government in power, then it follows that a guerrilla is an insurgent who uses a distinctive range of tactics to oppose established authority. An insurgent may become a guerrilla or the process may be reversed.

### Historical Evolution

The increased urbanization and expanded political consciousness which characterized many areas of the world shortly after the close of World War II were also experienced in Southern Africa. During this time, a group of politically sensitized African leaders began to emerge. Regardless of the nation involved, all of these leaders shared in common a goal of reformation of systems that they considered repressive. The ideological motivations for their calls for reform varied from Marxism to intense nationalism. The leaders found a receptive audience among thousands of dissatisfied African laborers. Consequently, powerful labor movements dominated Southern African politics in the 1950s.<sup>5</sup>

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, protests and demonstrations had hit every Southern African nation ruled by a White minority regime. The stimuli to action were similar in that the protestors and demonstrators felt oppressed and were becoming increasingly disillusioned with the prospect of achieving reform by non-assertive/

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<sup>5</sup>Patrick O'Meara, "Rhodesia: From White Rule to Independent Zimbabwe," in *Southern Africa in Crisis*, ed. Gwendolen M. Carter and Patrick O'Meara (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1977), p.23.

non-violent means. During this time, African nationalist leaders began to develop mass support for their programs. As many of the early African leaders were products of the urban environment and were somewhat unknowledgeable of rural affairs, this was a critical phase for them. In order to move the posture of the people from mass support to active mass participation, a cultural convergence developed involving a mutual acculturation of the ideas and beliefs of the urban-based leadership to the ideas and beliefs of the rural population.<sup>6</sup> As a result of this process, rural cadres were developed. These cadres were to play a major role in the conduct of the armed struggles which were to follow. Meanwhile, the White minority governments were becoming alarmed at the "subversive" effects of the African nationalist movements. Throughout the early 1960s, these governments resorted to harsh and severe actions to discourage any type of mass action. Such repression led the Africans to sense that any channels which were previously open for protest or for political mobilisation of the masses were now closed. Movements that had long operated within the system for reform, were forced underground into clandestine operations. The next step was to use violence and armed revolt.

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<sup>6</sup>Basil Davidson, Joe Slovo, and Anthony R. Wilkinson, Southern Africa: The New Politics of Revolution (New York: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1976), p.50.

### Guerrilla War

The writings of Mao-Tse Tung on guerrilla warfare have been quoted widely and have been put to practical application by virtually all post-World War II liberation movements. Mao identified three stages in a guerrilla war. There is often no clear demarcation to signal the transition from one stage to another.

The first stage, according to Mao, is the strategic defensive.<sup>7</sup> Other authors have called this stage the "contention" phase or "mobile warfare" phase. The inception of this phase is characterized by the continued clandestine development of an underground structure capable of recruiting and training cadres, soliciting financial and material support, and most importantly, politically mobilising the population (focus on the rural population). This mobilisation is important as it leads to the mass support and mass participation required of any movement attempting to achieve a national revolution by any means. Particular attention is paid to exploiting revolutionary conditions that already exist within the country (local grievances, the government's repressive policies, disillusionment of the majority of the people, etc.) to gain a sense of legitimacy. This exploitation is often accomplished by continuous political work among the people to explain the mission and goals of the revolutionary movement, by political agitation and civil disobedience, and by selected acts of armed violence. Militarily,

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<sup>7</sup>Al J. Venter, The Zambezi Salient: Conflict in Southern Africa, (Old Greenwich, Conn.: Devin-Adair Co., 1974), p.309.



the emphasis is on small defensive operations designed to protect guerrilla bands and their bases. Positional warfare is rigorously avoided, as evidenced by the predisposition of the guerrillas to tactically retreat rather than "slug it out" with superior government forces (mobile warfare).

The second stage of a guerrilla war is the stalemate stage.<sup>8</sup> Though also known as the "equilibrium" phase, it is more commonly associated with a distinctive type of military action, guerrilla warfare. Guerrilla warfare is also used in the latter stages of the strategic defensive phase, but at low levels of intensity. The guerrilla forces normally progress into this stage as a result of meeting with some success in their efforts to mobilise the population. This success is manifested by the increasing number of volunteers for the armed phase of the struggle. This in turn allows the guerrillas to extend and intensify their armed efforts by launching more attacks,

. . . relatively small units try to isolate even smaller units of the enemy and in quick engagement, defeat or inflict losses upon them and then disperse before larger units with superior firepower and superior technology can be brought to bear against the guerrillas.<sup>9</sup>

The guerrillas have several objectives in mind during this phase. First, they attempt to raise morale by hitting relatively small and easy targets. Second, they attempt to exploit these small

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<sup>8</sup>Al J. Venter. The Zambezi Salient: Conflict in Southern Africa, (Old Greenwich, Conn.: Devin-Adair Co., 1974) p.309.

<sup>9</sup>Kenneth W. Grundy, Guerrilla Struggle in Africa: An Analysis and Preview, (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971), p.25.

successes so as to increase the number of fighters available. Finally, they would like to establish the first small outlines of a liberated area.<sup>10</sup> This last objective is the most difficult to achieve; when it is achieved, it is usually the consequence of a series of related actions by the guerilla leadership. Building upon initial successes, the guerrillas extend and intensify the armed conflict to a point where the government's forces find themselves over-extended in their defensive activities. The guerrillas normally get the government forces to over-extend by employing tactics involving surprise, mobility, and shock action to overcome government units. Though the government's forces routinely respond with a variety of counter-guerrilla measures (i.e., resettlement villages, curfews, detentions, aggressive patrolling, population registration, etc.), the persistence and resilience of the guerrillas denies the government forces of their hopes for a quick victory. Hence, the morale and resolve of the government tends to fade. Meanwhile, the guerrillas continue to pick up momentum. Buoyed by their successes, small units begin to combine to form larger units which can engage more substantial targets. There is a strong rural bias at this juncture as the guerrillas seek to encircle the cities from the countryside. As guerrilla bases are expanded and consolidated, liberated areas begin to appear.

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<sup>10</sup>Davidson, p.58.

The establishment of a liberated area is essential to a guerrilla movement. It gives the guerrillas a safe-haven in which they can carry out many functions, including the training of new recruits, the tending of the wounded, and the establishment of a variety of political, social, and economic institutions which act as models of the life that can be expected when the guerrillas' national revolution comes to fruition. Most importantly, however, possession of a liberated area gives the guerrillas a sense of legitimacy nationally and internationally. There are often contradictory claims from the guerrillas and the government forces as to whether or not an area is liberated. By definition, liberation is complete when,

. . . this (guerrilla) force in any given area becomes strong enough to induce the enemy to disperse his own force among a number of fixed garrisons in defended camps; and when these camps are continuously and effectively besieged so that their garrisons can raid outside them only by fighting their way out of them, then the zone or area is rightly called a liberated area.<sup>11</sup>

Additionally, an area is not likely to be considered liberated unless the guerrillas can defend the area and the people in it from the military offensives of the government (this does not include helicopter raids or aerial bombardment). The abolition of government taxation and the cessation of forced cultivation of cash crops are two other traits of a liberated area.

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<sup>11</sup>Davidson, p.67.

Towards the close of the stalemate phase, the guerrillas begin to form a regular army for the final phase of the guerrilla war. This move is a good indicator of the successful political-military efforts of the movement. It is important that the interaction between political and military initiatives is strong as this is essential for success in the next and final stage of a guerrilla war, the strategic counteroffensive. In this stage, conventional/positional warfare replaces guerrilla warfare as the principal form of warfare. Guerrilla warfare still continues at lower intensities; however, primarily to keep the government forces off-balance. Oftentimes this stage is launched prematurely and results in defeat and reversion to stage two.

To be successful, a guerrilla movement must meet several basic requirements:<sup>12</sup>

- A simple, inspiring, convincing cause.
- Support from the local population . . . whether active, passive, voluntary, or coerced. This support is needed for food, information, recruits, freedom of movement, and security.
- Bases and sanctuaries relatively inaccessible to the government's forces.
- Sufficient mobility to attack the government's forces consistently on the guerrillas' terms.

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<sup>12</sup>Michael Shannon McCrary, Guerrilla Warfare in Namibia and Associated Implications for External Military Involvement, (Alexandria, Virginia: Defense Technical Information Center, 1979), p.72.

- The ability to move freely, concentrate forces, attack, and rapidly disperse.
- Material support (arms, equipment, food, medical supplies, money, clothing).

### The McColl Model<sup>13,14</sup>

McColl's research on guerrilla warfare stands alone in its value for portraying geographic aspects of the evolution of a national revolution. Using post-World War II revolutionary movements in China, Indonesia, Indochina, Cuba, The Philippines, and Greece as examples, McColl demonstrates how each stage in a national revolution is linked directly to control of some part of the state's territory. McColl's Model is based upon the contention that there is an intense commitment on the part of the guerrillas to capture and control a territorial base area within the state. Having accomplished this, the guerrillas proceed to transform this base area into a new state ("insurgent state") within politically hostile territory. McColl concludes that it is generally true that any revolution that has not followed the general pattern of development described below, has failed to achieve its objective of total national political control.

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<sup>13</sup>Paraphrasing of: Robert W. McColl, "The Insurgent State: Territorial Bases of Revolution," in Annals of the Association of American Geographers, (Volume 59, December 1969).

<sup>14</sup>Robert W. McColl, "Liberation Movements: Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique," in Contemporary Africa: Geography and Change, ed. C. Gregory Knight and James L. Newman, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1976).

McColl also contends that all revolutionary movements suffer an initial loss of a geographic base for their political opposition. This forces the movement underground and thus initiates the beginning of the territorial stage of the revolution. At this point, the need for a territorial base becomes evident. Having learned from history that governments will hold on to cities with great determination, contemporary movements normally forego attempts to capture and control a key city or region and instead focus upon the rural areas, saving attacks on the major cities for later stages of the revolution.

During the contention phase (aka strategic defensive/mobile war), the guerrillas attempt to create a guerrilla area in the countryside. McColl identified several ideal characteristics for a guerrilla area:

- Area with previous experience in revolution or political opposition to central government.
- Political stability at the national and local levels is weak or lacking.
- Location must provide access to important military and political objectives, such as provincial capitals, regional cities, and critical resource and transport services (access to key targets and large population concentrations).
- Areas of weak or confused authority, such as borders between provinces or between police or military areas, or even along international boundaries.
- Terrain should be favourable for military operations and personal security.

- As much as possible, the area should be economically self-sufficient.

During the equilibrium phase (aka stalemate/guerrilla war), the guerrillas attempt to establish fixed bases from which they hope to expand. Once established in a fixed location, a guerrilla base becomes the core area of the insurgent movement. These bases serve a variety of functions:

- Attacks on government control and territory may now be spread over a wider area and also coordinated from several directions at one time.
- Provide the geographic and military advantage of a physically secure haven.
- Owing to several social, economic, and political activities ongoing therein, base areas provide a major propaganda weapon for support of the general population.

Expansion out of these base areas is normally greatest in the direction of population concentrations. As one might expect, the ability of the guerrillas to expand is an indicator of the support and legitimacy they enjoy. As a result, the greatest significance of territory lies in the potentially supportive population residing there.

There are, however, several problems associated in this phase which are a result of the evolving pattern of geographically separate bases. First, communication and coordination of activities between bases is difficult. Second, the larger the number of bases and the

greater the size of the area controlled, the easier it is for the government to interdict these. Third, a problem with the orientation of each base develops. A particular base may be identified with local power cliques and lose association with the national goals of the revolution. To solve these problems and to give proper regard to the continuing need to politically awaken those who have not received the movement's message, an administrative solution is employed involving the creation of a formal state system (the insurgent state). This state is usually in the form of geographically expressed military and administrative units which are parallel to, but distinct from, those of the government. This state is usually announced through the proclamation of a "free government" or "people's government" or perhaps even a "republic." With one guerrilla base/liberated area designated as the capital, the other bases/liberated areas become state provinces. It is this system which sustains successful revolutionary movements throughout the final phase of their war for national political control and also helps them to consolidate control once in power.

#### Data Limitations

Prior to moving into the following Southern African case studies, data problems must be noted. It has often been said that "truth is the first casualty in war," and the contradictory claims made by opposing forces in Southern African conflicts certainly lend further credence to this notion. As a result, it is often difficult



or impossible to ascertain the true size of forces; whether or not a certain area is truly liberated, the true number of casualties in a meeting engagement, and other important information of this nature. Fortunately, this analysis is more concerned with general patterns than with an assessment of a seemingly unending series of small-scale ambushes, raids, landmine explosions, and the like. The evaluations of Southern African conflicts which follow are sensitive to the fact that oftentimes claims made by the government or guerrillas are best considered propaganda.

### Chapter Three: Insurgency in Mozambique

#### The Operational Environment

International boundaries, terrain, climate, population distribution, and communication networks are all factors worthy of assessment in any attempt to evaluate a guerrilla movement's operational environment. Each of these factors has a major role in the planning of strategy by guerrillas and government forces alike. Additionally, a variety of tactical concerns are based upon, or are affected by, one or more of these geographic factors.

Mozambique borders on five other nations. During the insurgent activity of the 1960s and 1970s, the White (Portuguese) settler regime in Mozambique enjoyed good relations with the White settler regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia (present Zimbabwe). They also enjoyed good relations with Malawi. As a consequence, the border areas that Mozambique shared with these countries were unlikely places for guerrilla training and staging areas. This was not the case with the Mozambique-Tanzania and the Mozambique-Zambia borders. The leaders in both Tanzania and Zambia favored the underlying goals and motivations of the insurgents in Mozambique and proved willing to provide the insurgents with recruiting, training, and staging bases. Furthermore, the length of these borders (approximately 800 km and 350 km respectively), presented Mozambican government forces with a formidable challenge in their attempts to stop the infiltration and exfiltration of guerrillas across the boundaries.

Within the long north-south elongated shape of Mozambique natural conditions have an important bearing upon the timing and operational effectiveness of guerrilla activities. The northern section of the country has a hilly, forest-covered topography which is highly conducive to guerrilla operations. The Rovuma (aka Ruvuma) River, which forms the Mozambique-Tanzania border, is the dominant water feature of the north (see map appendix 2). The tactical and strategic significance of this river is derived from the limiting effect it has on guerrilla mobility in the rainy season. Additionally, in the dry season before the rains, the water level of the river is low enough to provide many shallow crossing sites for guerrillas infiltrating into Mozambique from Tanzania. Farther south is the Zambezi River, which acts as a great natural dividing line for Mozambique, separating north from south. The Zambezi is most significant to guerrilla operations in its upstream sections, where it combines with the mountainous terrain of western and northwestern Mozambique. The heavily-wooded and rugged mountainous terrain of the area north of the Zambezi River is slowly replaced by bush country-like sparse savannah and the gently rolling terrain which characterize the landscapes of areas south of the Zambezi River. Flat, open terrain of this nature is hardly conducive to guerrilla operations because it offers little protective cover and leaves guerrilla forces exposed and vulnerable to air and ground strikes. The Limpopo River, the dominant water feature of the south, is of untested tactical and strategic significance, mainly because of the lack of guerrilla activity in this area.

The considerable latitudinal extent of Mozambique accounts for the occurrence of several climatic regimes in the country. Generally, the average annual temperature in the north is 79°F, whereas the average annual temperature in the south is 72°F.<sup>15</sup> However, it is the precipitation pattern which is of greatest military significance. The mean annual rainfall decreases southwards to approximately 20 inches per year from its high in the north of approximately 60 inches per year.<sup>16</sup> More importantly, most rainfall is concentrated in the months of November to April. During this rainy season, the vegetation becomes greener and denser and thereby facilitates guerrilla operations. The usual annual pattern is for guerrilla activity to accelerate with the onset of the rains. The rains also hamper the government counter-guerrilla efforts as the mobility of the government's forces is reduced by the decreasing trafficability of unpaved roads and by the increased vegetative growth. The rivers of Mozambique also become increasingly difficult to cross at the height of the wet season, when many of them are prone to reach flood level. Such river conditions tend to limit and hinder guerrilla infiltration into some parts of Mozambique.

Politicization and mobilisation of the population occupies center stage in a guerrilla struggle, hence the distribution of

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<sup>15</sup>Stanley H. Beaver and Sir Dudley Stamp, A Regional Geography: Part II Africa, (London: Longman Group Limited, 1964), p.160.

<sup>16</sup>John H. Wellington, Southern Africa: A Geographical Study, Volume 1, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1955), maps at end (III).

population within a country can be of great significance to the location and relative success of guerrilla action. During the insurgent activity of the 1960s and 1970s, Mozambique had a relatively high population density overall (22 persons per square mile), but sixty percent of the population (approximately 7.9 million) was concentrated in the northern section of the country.<sup>17</sup> The vast majority of the Portuguese settler population (48,000-200,000 persons) lived in the southern section of the country.<sup>18</sup> This White population concentration was probably a major reason behind the insurgents initially avoiding the south. The spatial distribution of tribal groups was also of great military importance. Mozambique has approximately 19 tribes within its borders. Such an ethnic variety was certain to be a challenge to any insurgent movement hoping to achieve mass support. Several tribes sprawl across international boundaries. The Thonga and Shona tribes are spillovers from the bulk of their tribal groups in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe; the Nyanja tribe, from Malawi; and the Yao tribe, from Tanzania and Malawi. It was the Makonde, however, who played the biggest role in the guerrilla activity of the 1960s and 1970s. Located in the northernmost section of Mozambique, the Makonde have approximately 120,000 tribal members in the southern border area of Tanzania to complement the 80,000 tribal members in the northern border area of Mozambique. The international boundary between Tanzania and Mozambique was of little or

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<sup>17</sup>Beaver and Stamp, p.159.

<sup>18</sup>Alan C.G. Best and Harm J. de Blij, African Survey, (New York: John Wiley, 1977), p.316.

no significance to these people whose traditional relationships and movements long preceded the placement of an international boundary in the midst of their tribal territories by colonial authorities. Location of the Makonde tribe across the border was a major factor which favored the initiation of insurgent activity in the northern section of Mozambique.

Lines of communication (roads, railroads, navigable rivers, etc.) are more developed in the south than in the north, mainly because Portugal's colonial policies focused upon taking advantage of the economic opportunities available in southern Mozambique. Most of the Portuguese modernization efforts and monies favored the south over the north. This had the effect of making the north a relatively remote region and left it with an underdeveloped transportation infrastructure. Such a situation is conducive to mobile and guerrilla warfare as underdeveloped lines of communication do not allow government forces the overland mobility which is of great importance in subduing guerrilla activity.

Viewed within this operational environment, the selection of the border areas of Mozambique-Tanzania and Mozambique-Zambia by the guerrillas for their initial thrusts comes as no surprise. There were several additional advantages:

- Each had a foreign government which was sympathetic to the cause of the guerrillas and offered the guerrillas safe-havens and bases within their borders.

- Each area had hilly, heavily wooded terrain which was highly conducive to guerrilla operations. Further, the vegetative cover was more longlasting than in other parts of the country due to a longer rainy season.
- The sprawl of tribal populations across the international border in these areas made it easier for guerrillas to generate support for their cause. More specifically, once recruits were attracted from these tribes, the guerrillas would likely enjoy logistical assistance and active participation from members of their tribe. Additionally, the northern section of the country contained the bulk of the population.
- The communication networks in northern Mozambique in the vicinity of Tanzania were underdeveloped to a point where the guerrillas could take advantage of the immobility of government forces in overland-oriented operations.

#### Initiation of the Struggle

Open political opposition to the Portuguese regime in Mozambique had its roots in a rebellion in Tete province in 1917 and strikes in Lourenco Marques in the 1930s. Active resistance swept through Mozambique's urban areas in the years following World War II. A general strike in 1947, a 1948 uprising, and the 1956 resistance activities which led to the deaths of 49 stevedores are a few examples of this growing resistance to colonial rule. Serious consideration of an armed struggle to oust the Portuguese regime

began after Portuguese-led armed forces massacred approximately 500-600 unarmed Makonde demonstrators at Muedo, Cabo Delgado province, in 1960.<sup>19</sup> In addition to providing the Africans of Mozambique with an issue that could be used to generate widespread nationalist support, the Mueda Massacre led to the formation of three major nationalist organizations:

MANU (Mozambique African National Union)

UDENAMO (National Democratic Union of Mozambique)

UNAMI (African Union of Independent Mozambique)

The Portuguese regime met this rise of nationalism by declaring opposition political parties and trade unions illegal, disallowed strikes, and brutally repressed all forms of African protest and unrest. As a result of these moves, the African nationalist organizations suffered a loss of their domestic base for political opposition.

By late 1961, all three nationalist organizations were in exile and were making attempts to organize political activity from abroad. The formation of FRELIMO (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique) in June 1962 by uniting NESAM (a nationalistic, anti-colonial group of young intellectuals and students), MANU, and the Nyasaland Mozambicans was by far the most significant development in the revolutionary struggle against the repressive policies of the

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<sup>19</sup>(Casualty figures vary depending on the source):  
 500 killed: McColl, "Liberation Movements: Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique," p.503.  
 600 killed: Davidson, p.183, and Tony Hodges, "Mozambique: The Politics of Liberation," in Southern Africa: The Continuing Crisis, eds. Gwendolen M. Carter and Patrick O'Meara, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1982, p.59.



Portuguese regime. During FRELIMO's First Party Congress, held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, agreement was reached on several objectives which emphasized FRELIMO's commitment to organizing an armed struggle within Mozambique and to the mobilisation of the population in its active support.

Specifically, the congress:

- Established that there was a need for a clandestine political force with Mozambique;
- Established that there was a need for a clandestine military program;
- Agreed to mount international propaganda campaigns against the Portuguese;
- Decided to start a program of primary, secondary and technical education. A decision was also made to begin sending students to foreign universities.
- Reached a consensus on the need to recruit and train people for the responsibilities which such a struggle would impose.<sup>20</sup>

By the end of 1962, the first group of insurgents were sent to newly "liberated" Algeria for guerrilla training. FRELIMO spent 1963 attempting to familiarize the population with its goals and programs. Efforts to organize students and secondary school teachers were combined with efforts to organize and lead worker strikes (i.e.

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<sup>20</sup>Arslan Humbaraci and Nicole Muchnik, Portugal's African Wars, (New York: Joseph Okpaku Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), p.147.

Lourenco Marques, Beira, and Nacola) to heighten the populace's awareness of the need for a national revolution. Ironically, continued Portuguese repression of strikes and other FRELIMO political efforts had the effect of assisting FRELIMO in disseminating its message and winning popular support.

Through the early months of 1964, FRELIMO gradually shifted its emphasis from politicizing the struggle to preparations for armed activities. Accompanying this shift was a locational change of work efforts away from the major urban areas to the Mozambique-Tanzania and Mozambique-Zambia border areas. From May 1964 through September 1964, FRELIMO began to stockpile arms and ammunition in northern Mozambique in preparation for the hostilities that were to follow.<sup>21</sup> On 24 September 1964, a day which is now called National Liberation Day, approximately 250 FRELIMO guerrillas crossed the Rovuma River from bases in Tanzania and struck and Portuguese installations in Cabo Delgado and Niassa provinces. The armed struggle had begun.

The similarities found in FRELIMO's initiation of the struggle and McColl's model are striking:

- There was an "initial loss of a geographic base for political opposition in the cities which forced the movement into the countryside."

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<sup>21</sup> McColl, "Liberation Movements in Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique," p.504.

- Even at this point there was a commitment to "gain control of the people."
- The attacks which initiated the armed struggle started "in the countryside."
- The areas within which fighting began had several of the attributes identified by McColl:
  - (1) Areas with previous experience in revolution or political opposition to the central government (1960 uprising in Mueda, Cabo Delgado).
  - (2) Favorable terrain (hilly, heavily-wooded).
  - (3) Areas with weak or confused political authority . . . along international boundaries (additionally, both provinces had bad networks of communication).

#### The Contention Phase

Identification of the beginning and the end for particular phases of a guerrilla war is at best inexact. Also, it is possible for all three types of warfare to be practiced in one phase. As mobile warfare is the primary type of warfare in the contention phase of the armed struggle, September, 1964, through the early months of 1966 can be used as an arbitrary designation of the duration of the phase.

The onset of FRELIMO's initial attacks brought swift retaliative measures from the armed forces of the Portuguese regime. In an effort to isolate the guerrillas from the population, the Portuguese relocated approximately 250,000 northern Mozambique Africans into

150 "fortified villages."<sup>22</sup> Having created a no-man's land by removing these Africans, the Portuguese sought to totally eliminate possible sources of guerrilla support by razing the vacated villages and burning the crops around them. These measures led to the flight of 28,000 Makondes to Tanzania and Zambia. These refugees were to play a significant role in later stages of the guerrilla war. In addition to continuing efforts to develop a nationwide clandestine structure to sustain the national revolution, FRELIMO guerrillas continued to conduct small-unit defensive operations to protect their initial territorial gains. They were successful in Cabo Delgado and Niassa provinces, but the gains which were made in Zambezia and Tete province in late 1964, had to be relinquished.<sup>23</sup> Setbacks of this nature are to be expected in the mobile warfare phase; they show the willingness of the guerrillas to trade space for time as well as the desire of the guerillas to avoid positional warfare.

It soon became clear that FRELIMO was trying to establish a territorial base in the northern section of Mozambique. The Portuguese had established a 500-mile defensive line from Nacala to Mandimiba. By 1965, FRELIMO activities in the region had led to the breaching of this line and the tightening of FRELIMO's grip on the control of Cabo Delgado and Niassa provinces.

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<sup>22</sup>Grundy, p.104.

<sup>23</sup>Humbaraci, p.148.

The contention phase of the Mozambican liberation struggle closely resembled the McColl model:

- FRELIMO did indeed act as though they saw a need for a territorial base.
- As Cabo Delgado and Niassa provinces were the areas where the initial attack took place, McColl would have agreed with FRELIMO efforts to establish guerrilla areas there.
- These provinces were large enough to give the guerrillas room to move and hide, and the Portuguese military's presence in the region gave FRELIMO a wide variety of political-military targets.

#### The Equilibrium Phase

The equilibrium phase, which is characterized by guerrilla warfare, probably began in Mozambique in 1966 and was gradually replaced by a general counteroffensive sometime in 1969. The strength of FRELIMO during this period grew quite rapidly from 1,500 armed men in September, 1965, to 8,000 men in September, 1967.<sup>24</sup> Most of this growth was in Cabo Delgado and Niassa provinces, where FRELIMO managed to extend their territorial gains and widen their base of support considerably. By 1968, FRELIMO had managed to establish fixed bases and liberated areas in the northern one-third of the country. In fact, by many accounts, FRELIMO had liberated one-fifth of the country

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<sup>24</sup>Wolf Roder, Voices of Liberation in Southern Africa: The Perimeter of the White Bastion, (Waltham, Mass.: African Studies Assoc., Brandeis University, 1972), p.29.

by 1968.<sup>25</sup> This gave FRELIMO control over a sizeable geographic portion of the territory as well as control over a large population base, and provided a substantial territorial base from which the armed struggle could spread and become a colony-wide, rather than a limited regional, action.

In July, 1968, FRELIMO held its 2nd Party Congress in Niassa. The decision was made to set-up a series of local administrative organizations within territory controlled by guerrilla forces in Mozambique. As Cabo Delgado and Niassa provinces were considered to be liberated, they served as the core areas around which the FRELIMO insurgent state formed. Symbols of state building could be found in:

- Formal integration of local leaders and provincial secretaries in liberated areas.
- Formation of schools and economic organizations.
- Systematization of regional government efforts to eliminate or reduce heavy taxes, establish more schools and health services, and to form local militias.

The creation of a formal state system was further evidenced by FRELIMO's compartmentalization of Mozambique into geographical administrative and military units.

The creation of an "insurgent state" within Mozambique served a variety of functions. First, it provided FRELIMO with an enhanced sense of legitimacy as it was now operating within its own national

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<sup>25</sup>Louise Stack and Don Morton, Torment and Triumph in Southern Africa, (New York: Friendship Press, Inc., 1976), p.103.

territory and not as a government in exile. Second, it helped to solve problems associated with tribalism and regionalism and the "threat" they posed to nation building. Finally, the insurgent state provided the population with a glimpse of how life would be under FRELIMO control. Hence, it was important that the chosen zones could ultimately be capable of internal self-sufficiency in essential services and subsistence.

Like the contention phase, the equilibrium phase in Mozambique closely resembled the McColl Model:

- There was an attempt to establish fixed bases.
- There was an expansion of guerrilla controlled territory.
- An "insurgent state" was created to help handle the problems which arise in the conduct of a national revolution.

#### The General Counter-Offensive

FRELIMO's combined infantry and artillery operations of 1967 in the northern provinces proved to be the forerunners of the more intense activities in the regular war phase of the national revolution. The ability of the insurgents to attack the Portuguese using regular units resulted from the employment of highly mobile guerrilla tactics in the previous phase. The mobile tactics in one region kept the Portuguese off-balance in that area while FRELIMO recruited and trained its regular force in another region. Through this process, FRELIMO was well on its way to seizing and maintaining the strategic initiative.

The opening of a FRELIMO front in Tete province in 1968 attested to FRELIMO's desire to extend its struggle throughout the colony. It would have been difficult to open up the Tete front without the support of FRELIMO bases in Zambia and concurrent FRELIMO armed activity in the northern provinces. Tete province was significant to the territorial evolution of the revolution in a variety of ways:

- Strategically. Control of Tete province would allow military operations to be extended into the center and southern portions of the country. Specifically, control of Tete province would secure FRELIMO's Zambia-based lines of communication and resupply to Manica e Sofala, Zambezia, and the southernmost provinces of Mozambique.
- The Cabora Bassa Dam Project was located in this province. It became the most significant political-military target as:
  - (1) Completion of the dam would allow Portuguese forces to block FRELIMO progress to the south and prevent FRELIMO forces from joining up with other liberation movements in South Africa and Rhodesia.<sup>26</sup>
  - (2) It would facilitate closer cooperation between the Southern African racist countries by the opening of the Zambezi and the development of water transport, by reciprocal banking and labor agreements, and by

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<sup>26</sup>Humbaraci, p.149.



distribution of branches of firms, all of which would be accompanied by arrangements for the mutual defense of such interests.<sup>27</sup>

- The Tete area was agriculturally and minerally rich. These attributes could be expected to be boons to the overall insurgent effort if the area was to become liberated.

Despite Portuguese offensives and counter-insurgent moves, FRELIMO attacks on targets in Tete province intensified throughout 1969 and 1970. By mid-1970, FRELIMO was involved in intense activities in Cabo Delgado, Niassa, and Tete provinces, and was extending the armed struggle across the Zambezi and into Manica e Sofala province, which contains the Beira-Umtali railroad link. FRELIMO control of the area around the rail line would have effectively split the country in two. By mid-1971, Manica e Sofala province qualified as a hotly contested area; and FRELIMO made determined attempts to extend the struggle to the densely populated southernmost provinces of Mozambique, where they claimed to have substantial support.

During this time, Malawi played a significant role in the territorial evolution of the guerrilla war. Taking advantage of cross-border tribal associations, favorable terrain, and the sanctuaries provided by an international border, FRELIMO established bases in southern Malawi from which to strike into Tete, Manica e

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<sup>27</sup>"Liberation Movements--Mozambique: Cabora Bassa Threatened," The Standard (Kenya), 25 February 1970.

Sofala, and Zambezia provinces.<sup>28</sup> There is, however, no indication that the guerrillas had the consent of the Malawian government. Having bases in Malawi allowed FRELIMO greater access to the central areas of Mozambique and also caused the armed forces of the Portuguese regime to overextend their defensive activities throughout the region.

The 9 November 1972 FRELIMO attack on the town of Tete in Tete province stands out as one of the most significant developments of the war--it was the first attack by FRELIMO on a major town. This attack underlined the territorial gains made by FRELIMO up to that point:

- Control of one-fourth of Mozambique's territory and of one-eighth of the population (approximately one million).
- The spread of armed combat over one-third of Mozambique.
- The "liberated" status of Cabo Delgado, Niassa, and Tete provinces.<sup>29</sup>

The attack also emphasized the fact that FRELIMO did not control a single major town in Mozambique. Until that time, it refrained from attacking major towns and cities until it had them surrounded by the countryside. Additionally, FRELIMO had to insure that it had extended the struggle to a point where they could expect to win a battle for a major town or city over "stretched-out thin" Portuguese forces.

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<sup>28</sup>"Internal Security--Malawi/Mozambique: FRELIMO Bases Denied," Radio Blantyre (Malawi), 11 December 1972. And, Venter, p.73 (describes how Mwanza, Malawi was used as a base).

<sup>29</sup>Davidson, p.68.

FRELIMO's efforts to capture Tete were also facilitated by assistance received from the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). Joint operations of this nature combined with the late 1973 southward expansion of the guerrilla war to Beira (the country's second largest city) to strengthen a growing sense of the inevitability of FRELIMO success among the African population. This sensing must have been reinforced further when guerrillas ambushed traffic on the Beira-Lourenco Marques Road in May 1974. This attack was the southernmost activity of the guerrillas at that time and demonstrated FRELIMO's ability to conduct operations in areas with large White populations. The April 1974 coup d'etat in Portugal signalled the end of the Portuguese colonial regime even as FRELIMO seemed destined to achieve its objective of independence by political-military means. FRELIMO's efforts were not wasted; by the time independence was granted in June, 1975, it had established a firm base of national support which was needed to contend with the nation-building problems that were to follow.

### Conclusions

FRELIMO's conduct of their national revolution closely followed the McColl model. Each stage of the struggle had a geographic objective--the capture and control of territory. By doing this first in northern Mozambique, FRELIMO was able to free increasingly large portions of rural Mozambique from the Portuguese regime. Following the creation of liberated areas in northern Mozambique, FRELIMO set up

an insurgent state system which enhanced their ability to expand both politically and militarily. The value of this process is best evidenced in the failed attempts of other Mozambique political movements that elected other courses of action. The Mozambique Revolutionary Committee (COREMO) and the Mozambique Liberation Movement (MOLIMO), both existent during FRELIMO's struggle, never gained a territorial foothold and thus never developed a broad appeal for their programs.

## Chapter Four: Insurgency in Angola

### The Operational Environment

As with Mozambique, the geographical setting in Angola in which the 1960s-1970s insurgencies took place was as important as the insurgencies themselves. The Angolan operational environment (international boundaries, terrain, climate considerations, population distribution, and communication networks) offered several major nationalist groups decided advantages over their Portuguese adversaries.

In its international boundary situation, Angola is one of only a few African nations with an island or exclave territory. Angola's exclave, Cabinda, lies approximately 40 miles north of the Zaire (former Congo) River which forms the border between Zaire and Angola-proper. Angola is bounded by Zaire, Zambia, and Namibia, and Cabinda is bounded by Zaire and Congo. The political orientation of the neighboring Zaire and Zambia regimes during most of the 1960s-1970s insurgencies was decidedly anti-colonial. Each of these regimes, however, had a different set of preferences regarding the insurgent groups they supported. As a result, the strategies of the insurgent groups clearly reflected their relationship with these neighboring "friendly" countries. Namibia (then called South-West Africa) offered the insurgents virtually nothing in terms of sanctuaries and bases. As it was still being administered as a territory of South Africa, Namibia was increasingly viewed, by South

Africa, as the last bulwark in the region against African nationalism and communism. Hence, the Namibia-Angola frontier seemed destined to play a minor role in the insurgencies which were to occur in Angola. Cabinda appeared to be vulnerable to armed insurgency due to its small size and its adjacency to two staunchly anti-colonialist regimes--Zaire and Congo-Brazzaville.

It may be assumed that differing regional terrain and vegetation patterns in Angola had a direct bearing upon the type of strategies and tactics that each insurgent group used in various parts of the country. Northern Angola offered the insurgents a variety of possibilities in adapting tactics to terrain. The northwest is hilly, an important physical attribute that practitioners of guerrilla warfare desire. To the northeast, however, the terrain flattens, the cover provided by the hilly terrain is gradually lost, and the ability of government forces to detect the presence of insurgent forces increases. Northern Angola is characterized by savannah-type vegetation with tall grasses and trees. Patches of tropical rain forests may be found along the well-watered sites like any of the large rivers cutting through the region (Chiacapa, Kasai, and Cuango). Dense vegetation of this nature can provide an insurgent group with a myriad of concealment possibilities.

Southward, the high savannah of northern Angola gradually gives way to dry forests of flat-topped trees and tall grasses, arranged in a manner which offers the guerrillas very little vegetative cover. Additionally, there is very little topographic relief

except in the southwest. Consequently, this area does not appear to be conducive to guerrilla operations. Scrub forests covering low lying hills, semi-desert savannahs, swampy valleys, and marshes cut by twisting rivers characterize the eastern regions of Angola.<sup>30</sup> Such natural conditions provide guerrilla forces with little cover. At the same time, however, they also limit the mobility of government forces in the field. Western Angola clearly possesses more topographic relief than the other sections of the country. Vegetative cover is minimal and varies from the dry acacia savannahs of the northwest to the semi-desert scrub bushes of the southwest. Finally, Cabinda seems ideal, in terms of terrain and vegetation, for insurgent activity. It is mountainous and lies on the outer edge of the equatorial forest belt.

Like Mozambique, Angola has basically wet and dry seasons. The rainy season is especially important to guerrilla operations--the rain makes the vegetation lusher, which increases concealment and makes it difficult for the government to forces to denude areas by burning, and it reduces overland vehicular mobility on unpaved roads and trails. It is often said that "the rainy season belongs to the guerrillas." Angola's rainy season begins around October and lasts until May. February, March and April seem to be the months with the heaviest rains. There is, however, great regional variation. Cabinda receives an average of 70 inches of rain per year in its

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<sup>30</sup>Don Barnett, With the Guerrillas in Angola, (Richmond, B.C., Canada: Liberation Support Movement Information Center, 1976), p.7.

maombe forests. The Bie plateau's (also known as Bihe or Benguela) rainfall varies between 40-60 inches per year. Northern Angola receives approximately 20 inches per year, whereas southern areas are considerably more arid at 10 inches per year.

The population of Angola varied from 4.8 million in 1960 to 5.7 million in 1970. The White component (172,000 in 1960 to 500,000 in 1974) was considerably larger than the White settler population in Mozambique and was strongly concentrated in the urban centers (western half of Angola) and the better agricultural lands. As in Mozambique, tribalism is important among the African population. There are five main tribes which speak approximately 100 languages (some spoken only by a few thousand people). The Bakongo tribe, one of these five, is located in rural northern Angola and numbered 500,000 in 1961. In addition, it had a significant cross-border population in Zaire of one million.<sup>31</sup> The Kimbundu (one million) and Lunda (400,000) also inhabit northern Angola. The central highlands are populated primarily by the Ovimbundu (1.5 million, aka Ochimbundu, aka Bailundo) and, in the south, the Ganguela and Ovambo tribes inhabit a sparsely populated region. The Ovambos have a large cross-border population in Namibia. Eastern Angola certainly qualifies as the most sparsely inhabited section of the country as vast areas, especially in the Cuando Cubango district (see map appendix 3), are almost devoid of human occupancy.

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<sup>31</sup>Population figures from:  
Bernardo Teixeira, The Fabric of Terror: Three Days in Angola, (New York: Devin-Adair Co., 1965), p.158.



Importantly, however, in this region there are large cross-border (with Zambia) populations of Chokwes, Luchazis and Luvaes. The great cultural variety and geographical distribution of Angola's population posed great challenges to any insurgency which aspired to lead a truly national revolution. Also, the cross-border tribal affiliations in areas where the foreign government is sympathetic to the insurgents was bound to have a marked impact on the conduct of guerrilla actions.

Insurgents are likely to save attacks on areas with highly developed lines of communication until the latter stages of the struggle. One reason is that superior transportation systems make it possible for the government to mass forces quickly in response to guerrilla attacks. The central-western area of Angola qualifies as such an area. It has Angola's most highly developed road system and is traversed by all major railroads. The northwestern section is moderately developed, as are portions of the northeast. Central-eastern and southeastern Angola have been neglected in development efforts and have only meager and primitive lines of communication. Consequently, its relative remoteness makes it an ideal place where guerrilla activities can be initiated and remain secure against government anti-guerrilla action on a large scale.

The character of the operational environment makes it clear why the insurgent movements in Angola initiated armed activities in the northern, eastern, and Cabindan sections of the country:

- The orientation of the Zaire regime in the north and the  
Zambian regime in the east was favorable towards the  
insurgents. Additionally, Cabinda's neighbors (Zaire and  
Congo-Brazzaville) were both willing to help the insurgents.
- The hilly, forested terrain of the Cabindan and north-  
western sections of the country were conducive to guerrilla  
operations. In the east, swamps and low lying hills could  
impede the mobility of government forces while giving the  
insurgents a means of cover and concealment.
- High levels of rainfall in Cabinda and the northern sections  
of Angola meant that the vegetative cover in these areas  
would be lush and longer lasting.
- The cross-border tribal affiliations in the north (Bakongo)  
and in the east (Chokwes, Luchazis, Luvaes) made it less  
difficult for insurgents to infiltrate into Angola from  
Zaire and Zambia.
- The northeastern and eastern sections were neglected in terms  
of infrastructure and government presence. Hence, they  
were areas where the political authority of the Portuguese  
were at their lowest levels and therefore could be more  
easily subverted.

#### Initiation of the Struggle

At the height of insurgent action against the Portuguese  
regime in Angola there were three main African nationalist groups:  
the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), the Union

for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). Only the MPLA will be matched against the McColl model since it was the only movement able to achieve its goals.

The McColl model holds that most national revolutions begin in urban areas and are then forced into rural refuges. Not unlike many African nations, post-World War II Angola was considerably more urbanized than in previous decades. This urbanization contributed to a heightened sense of African nationalism which, in Angola, was manifested in the early 1950s formation of several small clandestine movements: the Angolan Communist Party (PCA); the United Struggle of Angolan Africans (PLUA); and the Movement for the National Independence of Angola (MINA). Each of these groups spearheaded reform movements in a number of towns and cities. On 10 December 1956, the MPLA was founded in Luanda by merging PLUA, MINA and the PCA. Led by mulatto and Mbundu intelligentsia from the Luanda-Catete regions, the MPLA drew its greatest support from the urbanized sector of the 1.1 million Kimbundu-speaking people of north-central Angola. Despite this limited base of support, the MPLA committed itself to the organization of an armed struggle and political mobilisation of the whole population, with the ultimate goal of ousting the colonial Portuguese regime. Importantly, the MPLA, unlike the FNLA and UNITA, began inside Angola (albeit clandestinely) and not in exile.

Increasing evidence of African nationalism, including the formation of the Bakongo-based United Peoples of Angola (UPA, later FNLA) in 1958, led to severe Portuguese repression of African nationalist reform actions in 1959. Several events, or series of events (i.e. the Portuguese response to the June 1960 rebellions in the towns of Kolo and Bengo), dramatically signalled the need for new approaches in dealing with Portuguese oppression. An MPLA action on 4 February 1961 was such a new tactic. In the first armed action of the insurgency, and unquestionably the strongest evidence of African nationalism to that date, three bands of MPLA insurgents attacked the Sac Paola prison in Luanda. This attack was ill-advised for a variety of reasons; what is more important, however, is that it caused the MPLA to withdraw into exile and adopt a strategy of guerrilla warfare in Angola's rural areas.

In response to this attack and the 15 March 1961 UPA-sponsored Bakongo-Kimbundu uprising in Uige district, Portuguese reprisals from March 1961-September 1961 left 50,000 Africans dead and 300,000 refugees.<sup>32</sup> It was in the vicinity of this same district (specifically, the forested areas of the Nambuagongo-Dembos area northeast of Luanda) that the MPLA had sought refuge and had begun to build popular support. The relationship between the McColl model and this stage of the MPLA's drive for a national revolution is as follows:

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<sup>32</sup>Kenneth W. Grundy, Confrontation and Accommodation in Southern Africa: The Limits of Independence, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), p.123.

- The MPLA did indeed suffer a loss of a geographic base in the cities (Luanda) and was forced to move to the countryside.
- The MPLA did attempt to gain control of the people instead of relying on military action.
- The McColl model asserts that the armed struggle is initiated in the countryside. In this case, however, it appears that the armed struggle was initiated in an urban area (Sao Paulo prison in Luanda).

#### The Contention Phase

The years 1961 through 1965 constitute the contention stage of MPLA's national revolution, when political mobilisation efforts and mobile warfare in the form of small unit actions were characteristic. The MPLA settled upon the northwestern districts of Angola (Luanda, Uige, Cuanza Norte, and Zaire) as the base region in which to begin their protracted struggle to oust the Portuguese. This region had a variety of attributes:

- It was a region with considerable experience in opposition to central authority (March 1961 uprising);
- It provided the MPLA with good terrain (hilly, forested), room to move and hide, and access to important political-military targets (Luanda; important coffee growing region; Portuguese military presence);

- This section of Angola was close to a "friendly" border (MPLA was welcome in Congo-Kinsasha from October 1961-November 1963); and
- This area was economically self-sufficient.

It is questionable whether political stability in this region was weak or lacking. The MPLA made considerable progress, especially in 1962, in setting up clandestine organizations there. They developed a good support base among peoples who were thought to be strongly inclined towards the "program" of the FNLA. The FNLA was also quite active in this region from 1961-1963. This allowed the MPLA to work in small groups of 10-12 armed men who carried out a variety of minor military actions of a defensive nature. Through these actions, the MPLA served notice that it had a strong desire to establish a territorial presence within Angola. The MPLA met with considerable difficulty in accomplishing this goal, especially after their expulsion from Congo-Kinsasha (now Zaire). This deprived the MPLA of its easy access to the northwest sections of Angola, and caused the movement of a lot of ammunition, medicine and general resupply problems. These problems were alleviated to a certain degree by Congo-Brazzaville's granting sanctuaries and base areas to the MPLA in 1963.

With its new sanctuary in Congo-Brazzaville, the MPLA continued its drive to establish a territorial base in Angola by opening up its 2nd front/region in the Cabindan exclave in mid-1964. At first Cabinda seemed ideal--it was distant from the central authority in Luanda; it was mountainous and well forested; and from 1964 - much

of 1966, it was the only territory to which the MPLA had contiguous access from its operational bases. What Cabinda lacked, however, proved to be more decisive. First, it did not have a revolutionary situation. Most of its 60,000 people lived close to the coast and had yet to feel the repression of the Portuguese regime. Second, the MPLA had not developed an infrastructure of political education in Cabinda. As a result, they were perceived as "outsiders" when they entered Cabinda and sometimes met with harsh civilian resistance.<sup>33</sup> Despite MPLA's over-militarization of the struggle in Cabinda, and the deficiencies mentioned above, the MPLA was able to control large portions of Cabinda at one time and had established a revolutionary training center there. The MPLA's positive accomplishments there were significant enough to prompt some writers on Angolan insurgency to label Cabinda the "laboratory of the Angolan revolution."<sup>34</sup>

The contention phase of the struggle in Angola conformed to the McColl model in that:

- The MPLA demonstrated their concern for acquiring a base inside Angola;
- They tried to establish a guerrilla area where the initial attack took place; and

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<sup>33</sup> John A. Marcum, The Angolan Revolution, Volume II: Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare (1962-1976), (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978), p.174.

<sup>34</sup> Grundy, Confrontations and Accommodations in Southern Africa: The Limits of Independence, p.125.

- The guerrilla area they attempted to establish would have provided them with room to move and hide, and would have provided them with access to political-military targets.

#### The Equilibrium Phase

Greater MPLA aggressiveness and offensive spirit in 1965 marked the beginning of the equilibrium phase. The transition from the end of this phase to general counter-offensive/regular war was well on its way when the MPLA announced its formation of several 150-man squadrons in 1970.

The 3rd region (Moxico and Cuando Cubango districts) held center stage during this phase. Opened in May of 1966, this was an attempt on the part of the MPLA to further extend the struggle spatially and to continue to force the dispersal of Portuguese troops in a manner which would enhance the MPLA's ability to create fully liberated areas and regular units. The opening of this region was possible as a direct result of Zambia gaining its independence in October, 1964 and their subsequent provision of bases in Zambia to the MPLA. MPLA operations in the region were further aided by the existence of Luena and Luchazi cross-border tribal populations. By late 1966, all of Moxico and one-half of Cuando Cubango districts were claimed to be under MPLA control; MPLA patrols had reached the outskirts of population centers in the central Bie district; and MPLA actions extended well into the Malanje district in the north



and the Ovambo regions of the south.<sup>35</sup> Operations in the Nambuangongo-Dembos forest and Cabinda were minor and remained at the level of mobile warfare. Zaire's negative attitude towards the MPLA denied the MPLA the northern sanctuaries it needed to strike into Angola's heartland.

Throughout 1967, the MPLA seemed to be pursuing a strategy of extending the war across the entire nation, controlling the rural areas, and then encircling the towns, which were constantly being "prepared" from the inside. The MPLA was fighting regularly in nine of Angola's fifteen districts (Moxico, Cuando Cubango, Bie, Cabinda, Uige, Cuanza Norte, Zaire and Lunda) in 1968. One MPLA leader claims that the MPLA's 1968 expansion of its guerrilla areas allowed the MPLA to control one-third of Angola.<sup>36</sup>

One of the strongest indications that the MPLA had firmly established fixed bases and was well on its way to creating an insurgent state was the convening of its First Regional Assembly, inside Angola, in August, 1968. Held in the 3rd region, this action underlined the fact that, while the 1st and 2nd regions were still involved in mobile warfare, the 3rd region was into a well-developed phase of guerrilla warfare. As a consequence, the 3rd region acted as a base for the expansion of guerrilla areas in the 4th (Lunda and Malanje

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<sup>35</sup>Don Barnett, Interviews in Depth, MPLA-Angola: Spartacus Monimambu, (Richmond, B.C., Canada: Liberation Support Movement Information Center, 1973), p.2.

<sup>36</sup>Grundy, Confrontation and Accommodation in Southern Africa: The Limits of Independence, p.131.

districts), 5th (Bie, Huambo, Benguela, and Cuanza Sul districts), and 6th (Huila, Cunene, and Mocamedes districts) regions. In the midst of these advances, the MPLA had to deal with several setbacks, including the February, 1968 coup in Congo-Brazzaville, which caused the MPLA to virtually abandon its activities in Cabinda (the 2nd region). Additionally, this forced the MPLA to hastily relocate its headquarters in Zambia at a time when they had announced desires to move their headquarters inside Angola.

The opening months of 1969 found the MPLA, now approximately 7,000 in number, operating in three widely separated areas of Angola: the mountains north of Luanda, the northeast, and the southeast. This configuration presented the MPLA with a variety of problems not unlike those faced by FRELIMO at a similar juncture in their Mozambique operations (resupply operations; isolation that could lead to the hegemony of regionalism over nationalism). As a means of solving these problems and as a means of efficaciously escalating their struggle to the general counter-offensive stage, the MPLA announced its intention of developing structures equivalent to those described by McColl's insurgent state. Beginning with the liberated areas of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th regions, the MPLA set up administrative, political, and military structures which paralleled, to a certain degree, those of the Portuguese regime (medical clinics, trade unions, agricultural cooperatives, action committees, and defense militias). Additionally, a revolutionary vanguard party was set up as a means of controlling this "state."<sup>37</sup> Despite the vicissitudes of war in

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<sup>37</sup> Roder, p.57.

the various regions of Angola, the MPLA never relaxed its efforts to politically educate the African population in Luanda. This would prove to be pivotal in the late stages of their struggle.

The equilibrium phase clearly correlates with the McColl model in that:

- The MPLA attempted to establish fixed bases on Angolan territory;
- There was a concerted effort to expand guerrilla controlled territories; and,
- The beginnings of an insurgent state were created.

#### The General Counter-Offensive

The transition to this phase began sometime in 1970 with MPLA's announcement of its intention to combine some of its guerrilla units into several 150-man squadrons. It was expected that such units, when equipped with heavy artillery, mortars, rockets and other sophisticated weaponry, could use regular war tactics to attack large Portuguese targets. Having sufficiently dispersed Portuguese forces, the MPLA was able to form these squadrons in the 3rd region and set out to grasp the strategic initiative from there.

The first major attacks were launched in the general offensive of November, 1971-March, 1972. Targeted areas included:

- Luanda: capital of the country; it contained one-half of Angola's urban population.
- Bie: strategically located in the center of Angola; it was densely populated and contained numerous dispersed settler population. Additionally, it contained the strategically important Benguela Railroad.

- Lunda-Malanje: DIAMANG Corporation was located in Lunda. During this period, the MPLA initiated 15 attacks on Portuguese barracks in these targeted areas and the eastern region as well. This general offensive led to a stalemate, perhaps because:

- The MPLA was handicapped by Zaire's refusal to let the MPLA operate out of its frontier areas;
- The Portuguese began to place many Angolan Africans in protective hamlets in 1971 and thus deprived MPLA guerrillas of a primary source of support; and
- Dissension developed within the MPLA.

Thus, at the time of the 25 April 1974 coup in Portugal, the territorial evolution of the MPLA's struggle was well advanced. One-third of the country had been liberated; the MPLA had developed a strong base of support in Luanda which would prove to be decisive in the civil war that was to follow, and the MPLA had managed to extend the struggle over virtually all of Angola. These gains certainly gave the MPLA the appearance of a truly nationalist movement.

#### Conclusions

Like FRELIMO in Mozambique, the MPLA's national revolution closely resembled the McColl model. Though the leaders of the MPLA would likely be the first to agree that the central objective in a guerrilla war is control of the population and not just territory, they might also agree that this control is best achieved by successively controlling ever-expanding guerrilla areas. Additionally,

by continually expanding the struggle and politically educating the masses, the MPLA avoided the FNLA and UNITA pitfalls of appearing to be a tribal or regional movement.

## Chapter Five: Other Insurgency Movements in Southern Africa

The two successful insurgent movements in Mozambique and Angola generally fit the McColl model of territorial control. In this concluding chapter, insurgencies in three other political units of Southern Africa are examined briefly to see if the McColl model has a wider regional application and validity, at least in broad outline. Movements considered are the completed insurgency in Zimbabwe and on-going insurgencies in South Africa and Namibia. Each is examined for its concordance with the four stages of the McColl model.

### Stage 1.

The cities are the starting point of national revolutionary movements.

**Zimbabwe:** A variety of urban-based African nationalist reform movements were banned in the late 1950s - early 1960s. These banned movements, such as the African National Congress and the National Democratic Party, were the progenitors of several national revolutionary movements which followed (i.e. ZAPU--the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union, and ZANU--the Zimbabwe African National Union).

**South Africa:** Both the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) possess strong urban starting points. Both groups sought reform through urban based non-violent action (strikes, boycotts, demonstrations).

Namibia: The South-West African People's Organization (SWAPO) was founded in Capetown in 1957 by a group of Ovambo workers (it was then known as OPO, the Ovamboland People's Organization). After several futile urban based attempts at reform, i.e. the 1959 demonstrations/riots in Windhoek, it developed into a national revolutionary movement.

#### Stage 2.

National revolutionary movements are normally declared illegal and are thus deprived of open political opposition. They are forced underground for survival. This equates to the initial loss of their geographic base for political opposition.

Zimbabwe: By 1964, both ZAPU and ZANU had been banned, and both movements were forced underground or into exile.

South Africa: Both the ANC and PAC were outlawed in early 1960. Both organizations initiated a number of actions in South Africa after being outlawed. This demonstrated that they had "gone underground."

Namibia: SWAPO's history in this regard is somewhat complex. SWAPO has an internal wing in Namibia which has never been banned. The SWAPO external wing placed itself in exile so it could conduct the struggle from abroad.

#### Stage 3.

The insurgents must choose a special area/territorial base for their activity. The initial location of a national revolutionary movement is most often found in areas where the initial uprising took place.

Zimbabwe: Both movements chose a specific area for their activity which possessed a number of the favorable characteristics identified by McColl:

ZAPU: Western Zimbabwe vicinity Victoria Falls.

ZANU: Kuburi hills vicinity Kariba Dam.

Both areas were well forested and had a rugged topography. Both areas were near a "friendly" international boundary. Both areas provided each movement with access to population centers and significant political-military targets (ZAPU: Bulawayo-Livingstone railroad, towns of Bulawayo and Livingstone; ZANU: Kariba Dam, and towns of Sinoia and Salisbury). The political stability at the local level in each area was not weak or lacking and this may have accounted for the initial failures of these movements in these areas. Each group eventually settled into the areas where their initial uprisings took place.

South Africa: Not applicable; neither movement has progressed this far in their struggle.

Namibia: SWAPO initially established a base in northern Namibia at Ongulumbashe. This area was near an international border, was densely forested, and had been isolated from the mainstream of Southwest Africa life for decades. As it provided many migrant workers throughout Namibia and South Africa, the populace was quite



experienced in opposition to central authority  
(through strikes and demonstrations elsewhere).

Stage 4.

In the guerrilla war phase, the insurgents attempt to establish fixed bases and liberated areas.

Zimbabwe: Zimbabwean nationalist movements appear to have accomplished only the first part of this phase. There does not seem to be any indication that either ZAPU or ZANU was able to establish a liberated area in Zimbabwe which would have fit the description of a liberated area in the McColl model.

South Africa: Not applicable.

Namibia: Not applicable. Still in mobile warfare stage.

This brief summary indicates that the insurgencies in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia, at least as far as the last two have progressed, also generally conform to the territorial control sequences identified in the McColl model. These and the earlier findings for Mozambique and Angola suggest that the McColl model has predictive potential and can provide a reliable basis upon which comprehensive and long-range counter-guerrilla strategies of territorial control and protection can be formulated.

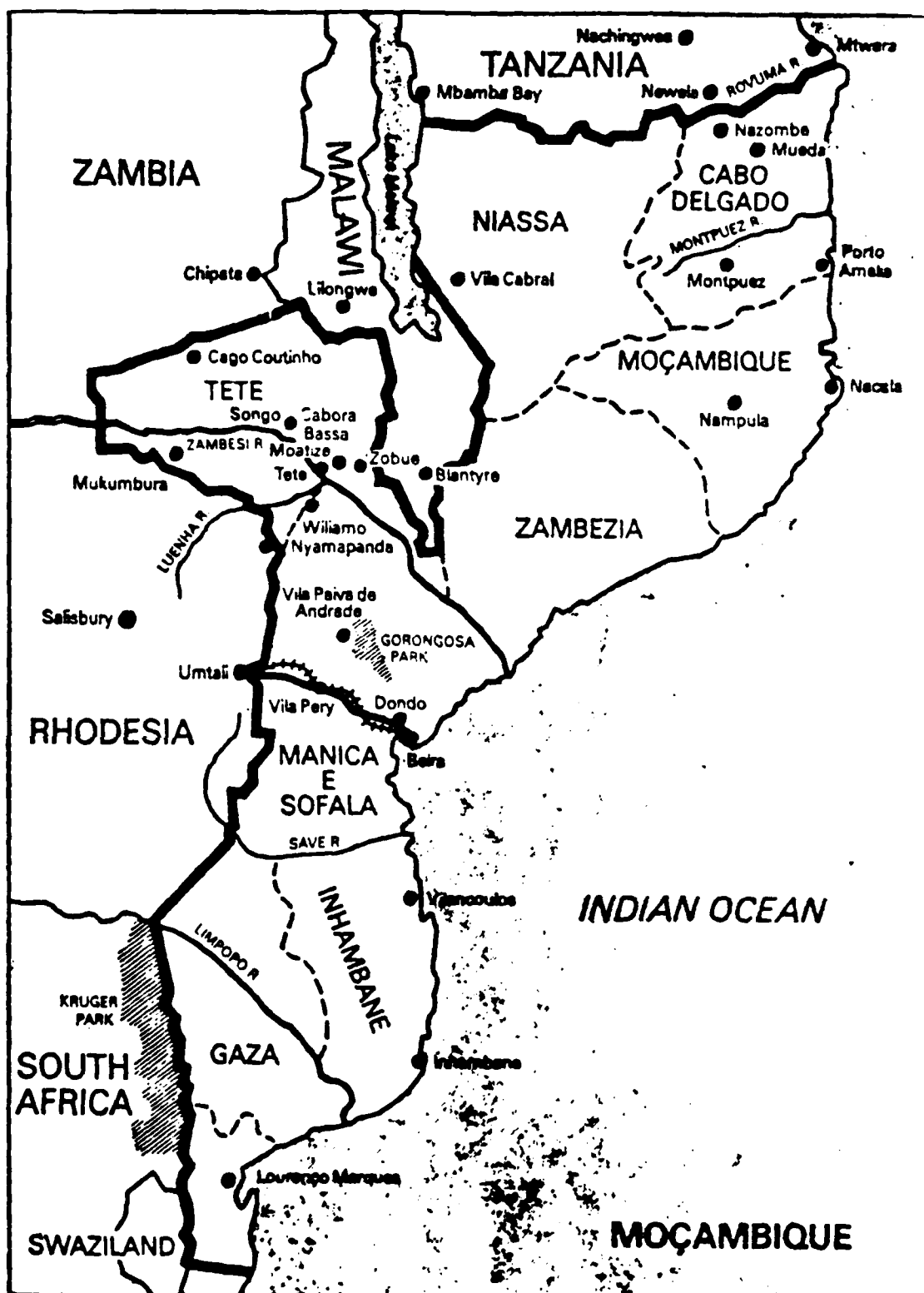
The usefulness of the McColl model can be enhanced by incorporating several elements, now omitted or overlooked, that surfaced importantly in the insurgencies in southern Africa. They are:

- Certain aspects of tribalism; i.e. cross-border tribal sprawl.
- The location of large clusters of non-indigenous peoples (i.e. White settler population) as this certainly affects the territorial evolution of the revolution.
- The location of guerilla facilities/activities outside of the target country:
  - + Refugee camps: Important because a great deal of recruiting for the insurgency occurs in these camps.
  - + Locations of leaders/headquarters: Has a significant impact on the conduct of the struggle.
- The territorial evolution of the struggle when there are several co-competitors vying for dominance in leading the national revolution.

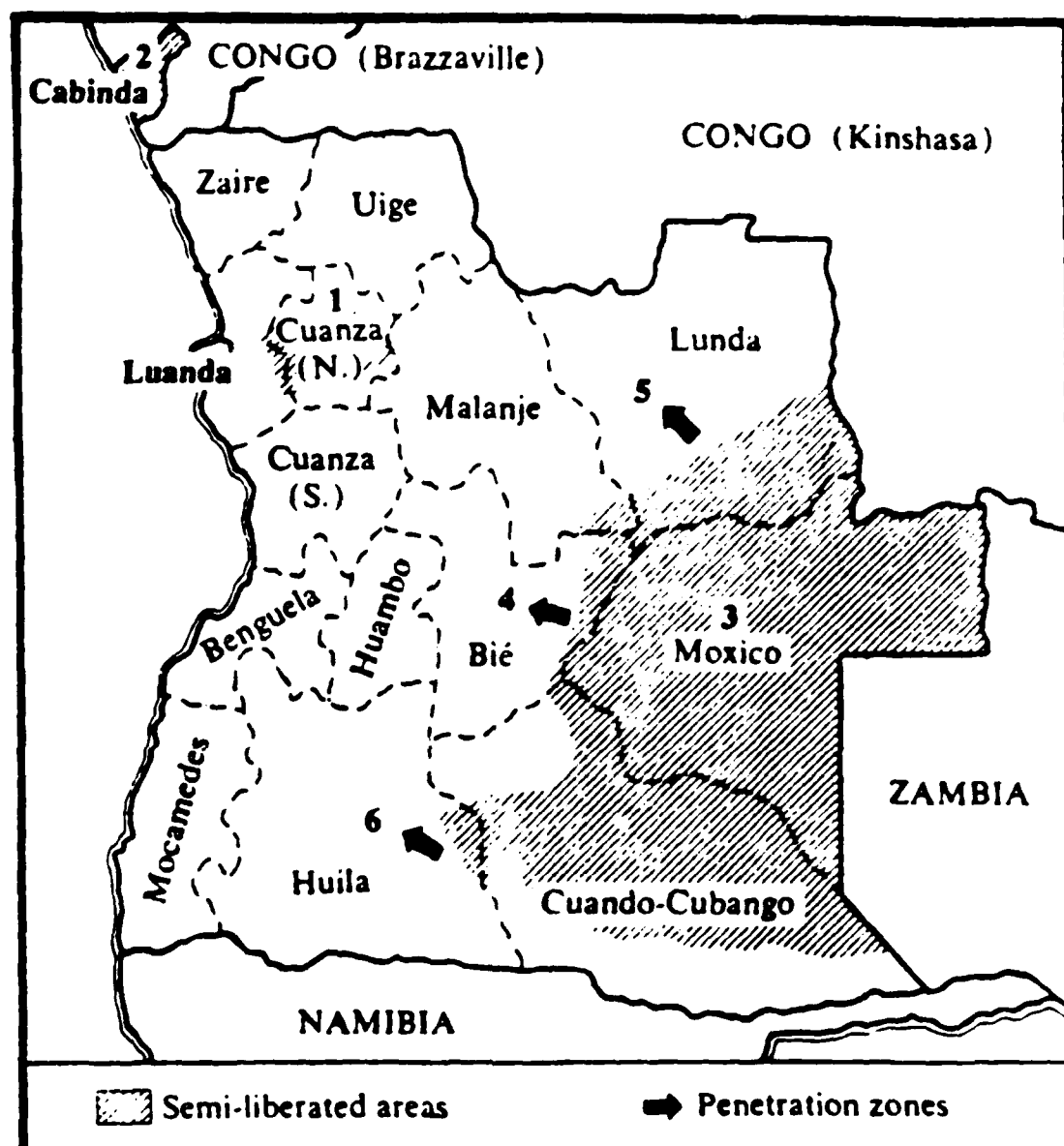


### GUERRILLA WARFARE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, 1970

Map One Source: Kenneth W. Grundy, Confrontation and Accommodation in Southern Africa: The Limits of Independence, 1973.



Map Two Source: Al J. Venter, The Zambezi Salient: Conflict in Southern Africa, 1974.



Map of MPLA zones of combat and semi-liberated zones in Angola, early 1970's.

Map Three Source: Jennifer Davis et al., No One Can Stop the Rain: Angola and the MPLA, 1977.

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